



People in the city

Theatre stalwart tackles the System

CARL COLLISON

Fatima Dike, the respected South African playwright, mentor and theatre practitioner, laughs as she recalls: "I got into writing quite by accident."

Ms Dike, who is managing director of the Artscape Theatre-based Siyasanga Theatre Company, which she co-founded in 2005, says: "My intention initially was to become a teacher, because I had such a passion for English and history."

"But then a friend of mine pointed out that, under Bantu education, black teachers didn't get to choose what they wanted to teach, nor which school they would get to teach at."

"This of course came as quite a

shock to me," she laughs, "so I thought that if I couldn't get to teach what I was passionate about, I just wouldn't teach."

"A friend, Sue Clarke, later told me about a space that was being renovated into a theatre and wouldn't I like to join her in volunteering."

"I just said: 'Hayi, wena, you white people like volunteering and working for no money.'

"I did the volunteering and it was there (at the former Space theatre in Long Street), while working as an assistant stage manager – at which I was very bad, by the way – that Robert Amato, the theatre's director, one day discovered my notebook with all my poems written in it."

"He basically forced me to write

a play in three months or he'd fire me," she laughs.

"Of course, I wrote it and that became my first play, *The Sacrifice of Krelh*. That was in 1976."

More than 30 years later, Ms Dike is a stalwart of the South African theatre community and in 2009 was awarded a Long-Life Achievement Award at the Black Theatre Festival in North Carolina.

The Langa resident will soon be directing the upcoming production, *iSystem*, which opens at the Artscape Theatre on Thursday November 14.

The play, which emerged from the Black Playwrights' Forum, which in turn forms part of the Artscape New Writing Programme, is the story of a police-

man who is accused of shooting an unarmed bystander.

Says Ms Dike: "You know, we, the people who came out of the protest theatre era, no longer give voice to the unhappiness of the majority of people."

"I like the fact that this young man (Anele Rusi, who wrote *iSystem*) put his head on the block by writing this."

"Everyone who comes to see it will most likely walk away with their own view of the characters."

"And for me, this is what theatre is all about."

● *iSystem* runs at the Artscape Theatre from Thursday November 14 to Saturday November 30, at 7.30pm. Tickets cost from R50 to R85. Book through Computicket or call 021 421 7695.



■ Fatima Dike

the CapeTowner Classified

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Minimum Requirements:

- 2 years proven journalistic experience, including writing in English and taking photographs.
- A wide interest in and knowledge of community affairs.
- Contacts in the areas served by the Southern Mail.
- Be willing to work over weekends or after hours.
- A valid code 08 driver's licence is essential.

(Please include a copy of your driver's licence with your application)

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This appointment will be made in line with the Cape Community Newspapers' employment equity plan.

Applicants should submit a letter of application and curriculum vitae to: **Lucien Jacobs, Human Resources Department, Newspaper House, 122 St Georges Mall, P.O.Box 56, Cape Town or fax 021 488 4181 or e-mail: lucien.jacobs@inl.co.za**

Closing date for applications is Friday, 8 November 2013.

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